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Georgia

Old Fort

361 DUSTY, WINDY LANES BORDERED WITH ROWS OF squat wooden houses, wide paved streets lined on each side with paintless one-story frame structures, the smells of river, fishboats, fertilizer plants and escaping gases, and overshadowing all, the gigantic gas reservoirs. That is the impression given by the Negro section of the Old Fort, located in the extreme northeastern section of Savannah. Here life goes on serenely for days, months. Then suddenly, as it happened only a short time ago on a calm Sunday morning, a woman is stabbed in the back and left writhing on the pavement to die before a swiftly gathering crowd. It was whispered among the frightened spectators that the death was caused by conjure, for despite all efforts to remove the knife it remained firmly embedded in the victim's back.

363 361 The streets present a monotonous aspect because of the absence of grass and trees. Yet the pedestrian is frequently surprised to come upon a dead-end alley blocked by an old brick tenement house with lovely arched windows or to find gay flowers in boxes and tin cans on some of the low stoops. On several corners the houses abruptly give way to small grocery stores or beer parlors.

368 771 There are two Baptist churches and one Sanctified church in the Negro part of the Old Fort. Although the people are devout believers in all the tenets of the Christian faith, many of them, particularly the old ones, are bound by older beliefs and superstitions. There exists among them a deep-

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123 But "Miz Minnie" felt differently. "Go long, yuh chillun. Go long wid yuh crahb an stop lissnin tuh grown folks." Minnie flapped her apron and they scattered like a brood of young chicks.

754 "Yasm, cose yuh do heah bout cunjuhin."[15] Minnie turned back to us. "Dasso. Dey's alluz talk bout it, an I know ole Lewis McIver (Plate XI)[A] wut libs yuh right now, wut foun a bottle buried in his mattress. He wuz sick an somebody wuz tryin tuh fix im. I seen dat bottle muhsef, wid muh own eyes. Yes, ma'am, I sho seen it. It hab yulluhlak oily lookin stuff in it an deah wuz a piece uh clawt stuck tru wid needles an pins in it."[8] Minnie looked worried at the mere memory. "I seen it fuh sho an dohn nobody know who put it deah. But Lewis is bettuh sence it wuz took out. He say he ain hab neah so much pain.

"Den wen muh ole uncle wuz sick,[15] dey sen fuh a ole uhmun wut know bout cunjuh[48] an she wehn out in duh yahd an dig up a piece uh clawt wadded intuh a ball wid nails in it an she cas it away. I seen dat too. She say somebody plant it deah gense im.

"Dey make mojoes outn anyting but dey do say grabeyahd dut[9] an nails an blood an haiah,[10] dey is impawtant. Cose I know bettuhn belieb all dis," she laughed, "but it make yuh sked an yuh sho full uh worry ef somebody tryin tuh fix yuh." After cogitating on these dangers Minnie (789) smiled, "But ef yuh weahs a silbuh dime tied tuh yuh ankle an yuh step obuh anyting wut put down fuh yuh, duh dime'll sho tun black sudden an quick an den yuh knows it."[12a, c, d]

•682 Pin Point attained a certain measure of fame as the set-
674 ting of the Bo-Cat murder in 1932. Limerick De Lancy, Pin Point Negro nicknamed Bo-Cat, killed his wife, Catherine, and dropped her corpse into the deep waters near Hell (533) Gate. When the crime was discovered, the fact that it had taken place on Friday, the thirteenth, loomed significant in the consciousness of the small community and in no time in-

A. [See Category 142, plate following p. xxxii-K--Analyst]

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spired a ballad. Attributed to no single author but apparently added to from time to time, the ballad now runs:

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On duh thuteent day ub May
Yuh could heah ole Bo-Cat say,
"Git muh deed an policy.
Tun it in duh ashes way."

Den ole Catherine she begin tuh inquyuh.
Didn know ole Bo-Cat had dem in duh fyuh.
It a shame how Bo-Cat done he wife.

Put uh in duh boat,
Dey begin tuh float,
Dey float tuh duh Raccoon Keys.
He knock uh on duh knees.
Catherine holluh, "Wa-Wan-Wa."
Bo-Cat make uh "Na-Nan-Na."
It a shame how Bo-Cat done he wife.

He knock uh in duh bres
An duh oah done duh res.
It a shame how Bo-Cat done he wife.

He knock uh in duh back
An duh oah miss an crack.
It a shame how Bo-Cat done he wife.

Wen Bo-Cat wehn back home
He meet uh daughtuh all alone.
Uh daughtuh say, "Bo-Cat, Bo-Cat,
Weah my mama is?"
Bo-Cat tun right out he head
An he tro uh cross duh bed.
It a shame how Bo-Cat done he wife.

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DRUMS AND SHADOWS

Dey got Bo-Cat in jail
Bout tuh hang im by duh rail
It a shame how Bo-Cat done he wife.

115 One of the Pin Point women, Margaret Snead,* recalls vividly the events of the De Lancy crime.

"Wy, duh night fo Catherine De Lanzy wuz kill, she spen it in town wid me," said Margaret Snead. "Attuh dat night I didn see uh no mo. People frum duh Pint come inquirin bout uh but nobody seem tuh know nuttn bout uh weahbouts. Bout two weeks latuh, a pahty uh wite mens out huntin come cross duh body at Raccoon Keys. Dis a ilun way beyon Hell's Gate. Mus be mohn twenny miles frum duh Pint. I dohn see as how nobody could carry a pusson dat fah jis tuh murduh em. Anyways, duh body wuz brung tuh duh city, an at duh unduhtakuh's office people went in tuh see ef dey could dentify it. Dis a hahd ting tuh do. She bin in duh watuh fuh days an days fo a high tide wash duh cawpse on sho. Duh body wuz caught tween two logs weah duh buzzuds went tuh wuk on it.

"I membuh a great big cawn wich she use tuh suffuh wid but couldn nebuh git rid ub. So I went in an had a look at duh foot, an sho nuff deah wuz dat cawn jis lak it use tuh be wen she wuz libe.

"Her ole huzbun, Limbrick De Lanzy, already wuz rested, an he git sen up fuh life. It wuz Friday, May duh thuteent, dat ole Limbrick carried Catherine off down duh ribbuh an murduh uh. A double bad luck, Friday an duh thuteent,[21] das wy dey make up duh song."

777 674 682 764 "Was the body buried at Pin Point?" we were interested to know.

"Yes, it wuz, but we didn hab no settin-up cuz duh body wuz too fah gone. Dat wuz sad. Ebrybody lub Catherine an fuh uh tuh die an be buried widout a settin-up aw lettin

* *Margaret Snead, Pin Point.*

PIN POINT

674 anybody view uh face aw lay deah hans on uh[31] wuz sho a
682 pity.[36]
764 "Ebrybody wuz at duh fewnul. Come frum miles roun tuh pay deah las respecks tuh a po wife murduhed by uh huzbun on Friday duh thuteent.

"Duh body wuz brung frum duh unduhtakuh's pahluh straight tuh Sweet Fiel ub Eden Chuch at duh Pint. Chuch so crowded yuh caahn hahdly see duh coffin up in front. We sing hymns, an den wen duh singin hab die out an yuh could heah jis a lill hummin heah an deah, somebody stan up an say, 'Catherine De Lanzy wuz a sistuh ub duh Lawd.' 'She sho wuz,' somebody else say. 'She wuz a chile ub Jesus an she walk in duh way ub righteousness.'

"Dis staht off duh whole congregation an deah mustuh bin neah a hundud people git up an gib testimony bout Cather-
[152] ine's goodness. Some people cry an scream wen dey tell duh congregation wut a fine uhmun she bin.

"Den duh remains wuz took tuh duh cimiterry neah duh chuch an buried. Duh whole time we sing hymns an sway tuh duh soun uh duh music. Ebrybody tro a hanful uh dut in duh grabe an[38] wen duh grabe digguhs fix duh moun, we put some uh Catherine's tings on duh top. Deah wuz a lill flowuh vase wid duh bottom knock out, an a lamp chimney, an some puhfumery bottles, an duh pitchuh she made ice watuh in jis fo Bo-Cat tuk uh off.[47] Den duh ministuh nounce dat duh fewnul suhmon wuz tuh be preach at duh annyul memorial wen dey pray fuh ebrybody who die durin duh yeah.[42] An den das all an we wehn home."

551 "Why was Limerick De Laney called Bo-Cat?" we asked. "Deah ain no signifcunse tuh dat. I hab a frien dat ebrybody call Friday but[30] uh name is Lula. I hab a cousin name Augus Bond an a son name May Bud simply cuz he wuz bawn in May. One uh muh brothuhs wuz call Baby Head cuz at birth he wuz a tiny baby wid sech a great big head.

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754 301 789 please. I carry it in muh pocketbook an duh nex day it tun black an I know fuh sho dey wuz tryin tuh cunjuh us."[15]

754 Repeated efforts were made to conjure the newcomers. At first bottles filled with a queer oily substance were buried around the house. When these failed in effect a more powerful charm was compounded, and a few days later the intended victim discovered buried in her back yard what she described as "a bottle neck down in duh groun. It wuz filled wid some kine of funny lookin oil."

754 683 "I know dis wuz a cunjuh," she said. "I call muh huzbun an show it tuh im. He git plenty mad an say he gonuh settle mattuhs once and fuh all wid dis cunjuh man. He wait fuh im by duh lane an wen he come long, he grab im an shake im an tell im he know all bout wut he bin doin. He tell im he bettuh stop tryin tuh cunjuh us, fuh he know bout cunjuh his ownsef an he tell im all duh tings dat he done. Wen duh cunjuh man heah dis, he fall down on is knees an beg muh huzbun tuh fuhgib im. He tell im bout all sawts uh magic dat he wukd on udduh folks in duh neighbuhood. He promise not tuh do no mo uh dis an muh huzbun let im go."

754 753 We were told of another woman who, as a result of conjure,[15] fell mysteriously ill and felt snakes running up and down her left side under the skin.[5, 50] Medical care did not help the case and she is now, according to report, "jis wastin away an no one caahn do nuttn." •

754 789 682 Graveyard dirt is often employed in the making of conjure bags.[5, 9] If possible this must be taken from the grave of a murdered person and some money must be left in exchange. Not very long ago when a man was arrested for murder, his friends, wishing to save him, went to the grave of the murdered man, secured some dirt, and left three pennies on the grave. A man, lingering in the vicinity, stole the money and shortly thereafter spent it in the neighborhood

• *Lee Baynes, Sandfly.*

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754 store. As one neighbor put it "duh han come widin an inch
789 uh wukin." Although the defendant was not acquitted, he
• 682 was sentenced to a mere two or three years, and there was some speculation as to whether or not the theft of the money had been what kept him from going entirely free.* [64]

754 A woman, suspecting that someone was attempting to conjure her daughter,[15] dug up the ground around her house until she found the evil charm. Of this case our informant says, "It wuz two balls of graveyahd dut,[9] all wrapped up in a clawt. Dey tuk it roun an show it tuh ebrybody. It wuz up at duh poolruhm all spread out on duh pool table, an folks stop in all duh time tuh xamine it. Duh girl dat wuz
[789] cunjuhed buy a han[6] frum a root man an duh spirits John bodduh uh none." **

People in the community believe that extremely powerful charms can be made from the dust from people's foot tracks.[7] There is a constant dread that someone will secure this dust, and zealous care is taken to prevent this. We were told, "A ole uhmun who libed heah-a-bouts wuz so sked dat somebody would fix uh dat she alluz carried a rake wid uh. Down duh road she would go, rakin up uh foot-steps in back of uh, so dat nobody could git dat dus an fix uh." †

[753] Another resident who neglected these precautions said she became very ill, due to the fact that someone had manufactured a charm from the dust left by her foot tracks. As her condition became more aggravated she at length consulted a
[789] root doctor. He sold her a counter charm[6] and soon the mysterious illness disappeared.‡

761 Death, especially if violent or unexpected, is attributed to
754 witchcraft or conjure.[15] One woman voiced the sentiment of many of the community when she said, "Theah ain't supposed tuh be no sech thing as nachul death yuh in Sandfly.

* *Lee Baynes, Sandfly.*
** *Ibid.*
† *Ellie Davis, Sandfly.*
‡ *Lizzie Jenkins, Sandfly.*

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
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have a tradition of politeness. Among the Limba of Sierra Leone for example, "shame" (Kulaku) and "honor" (yiki) are spoken of often. According respect to leaders, strangers, one's wife, and her relatives, is of great importance. Fear of shame is a very real sanction in everyday life. Rudeness or abusive behavior also brings shame, which only an apology can erase. Ceremonious welcomings involving hand shaking are greatly stressed among Africans. Thanks, greetings, and farewells are often reinforced by a gift, approved of as much for its token value of "giving the words weight," as for its economic worth. A gift of a fowl, eggs, or rice is commonly offered when guests arrive. A physician assigned to the colony of Sierra Leone in the late eighteenth century, wrote that the people possessed a "great share of pride, and are easily affected by an insult." They could not even bear a harsh expression, or raised voice without distaste. One of the severest insults toward an African was to "speak disrespectfully of his mother," which the Africans called "cursing her." More recently, a researcher in the Kongo was told that there were two things he should know right away about BaKongo peoples. "The first is that we all came from Mbaza Kongo. The second is the importance of good manners."[11]

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Aside from a spirit of cooperation, Gullahs used their religion to foster a sense of justice. Undoubtedly, since they were exploited so unjustly on all quarters, it was important that among each other fairness predominate. The power of the community and the extent to which slaves could pursue their indignation against erring members was not always peaceful, and could reach extreme proportions. Jenkins Mikell's recollection of a grisly event on Edisto Island represents a case in point. Crimes within the slave quarters were infrequent, but they did occur:

> Early one morning, we were awakened by the repressed excitement we felt around the dwelling. We soon found that all the people on the home place were in a terribly wrought up state and waiting for the Master to appear. A murder had been committed among them. A man had killed his wife in anger. The poor woman had been found dead hanging by her neck to the rafter of the cabin, and the guilty husband had run away and left her there. He was caught during the day . . . he was tried and convicted and remanded to the scene of his crime for execution. . . . On the day of his execution very little work was done in the community by the negroes. All attended the tragic scene. His coffin was made on the plantation and placed in a wagon. The doomed man, tied, seated upon this coffin rode six miles to the place of execution, and by his side seated on the same gruesome seat was his companion in guilt—a woman. She was made to witness at close quarters his dreadful end. She returned to the place of burial,

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
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on the plantation, seated on the box containing his dead body, and as the body was lowered into the grave, she was seized by a frenzied mob, forced into the open pit and every effort was made to bury her alive. These efforts nearly succeeded. But wiser counsels prevailed and she was at last released.[12]

In this situation moral judgment within the slave community was not in keeping with the Christian doctrine of forgiveness that usually characterized the Gullahs' disposition. Instead, it indicates how African influences continued. Apparently, Gullahs believed that some violations should not be summarily dismissed or forgiven. Among the Windward Coast peoples, no concept of sin seems to have been present. Yet among some, the Mende for example, there was a sense of guilt in two areas of government—breaches in communal laws and regulations, and violation of the rights of those unable to help themselves. The BaKongo considered sin to be a wrong against society, not God, and thus should be punished by society. The above Gullah crime could be viewed as betrayal of communal trust, an individual violation, and as an immoral act against the people as a whole. Such violations called for punishment, not only for the offender, but for those closely related to the act.[13] Such irrevocable behavior among the bondspeople could possibly undermine their collective strength and organization, and no doubt Gullahs felt that depravity should be rooted out in a drastic manner as a warning to others who might be driven to commit such violence. Yet the fact that the example was an atypical incident demonstrates that adoption of a common socioreligious connection among Gullahs had more of a restraining effect on deviant social behavior than threat of violent retaliation.

In the Gullah slave community the most important people were religious leaders, comprising two groups. One consisted of black elders, and the others were spiritual parents, or the black elders' "help." Black elders were chosen by whites, often by Baptist planters. These black leaders, referred to as "deacons" or "watchmen" were responsible for "watchcare" of members of the plantation societies. They were the experienced church members in the quarters, having some knowledge of Christianity and probably taking their religion more literally and seriously than their fellow bondspeople. Black elders maintained relatively close contact with the Baptist churches during the last thirty years of bondage, and were exemplary people, managing to walk a thin line between securing the trust and confidence of both masters and slaves.[14] Undoubtedly, to the slaveholders black elders embodied those features of Christianity which,

4: Caravan & Caravan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
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South Carolina
Johns Island

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[432] or two, and I was able to understand the Greek language in everyday speaking in business, and that helped me to go on. That is the thing that helped me to educate most of my children.

Mr. Esau Jenkins

HERE'S A MAN BEING SHOT FOR A DOG

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682 Two evil things that happened motivated me to get involved in my work on Johns Island. In September of 1938 two Negroes were riding in a truck. A dog ran out of a gate. The man driving tried to avoid it, but he couldn't, he hit the dog and killed it. The dog's owner, a white man (he wasn't a native of Johns Island, but had come here to live), jumped in his own car, and he carried a shotgun and ran this man down.

The fellow who wasn't driving tried to plead with him, ask him not to shoot him because he didn't mean to run over this dog, but he shot this fellow dead.

The family got a white lawyer from Charleston to try to bring that case in the court, and from 1938 until this present time, nobody heard any more of that case.

Well, that's something that I felt like people who have good will and think about decency and human dignity should do something about.

Then in the early '40s a white man, Mr. Malone, move from Mississippi onto Johns Island. He was sixty years old, his wife was twenty. They had a female dog and as a rule at certain times of the year, several dogs will go around these homes with female dogs. For some reason her dog was across the street one morning at a Negro man's home. She heard her dog's voice hollering as if somebody was beating the dog, and she went over and asked this Negro man by the name of Sammy Grant if he put his dog on her dog.

He said, "No, I didn't."

She said, "Yes, you did."

And he said, "Whoever said I put my dog on your dog tell a damn lie."

So she went back home, and we don't know what she told her husband.

Every morning Mr. Malone caught a truck about seven o'clock to go to work. The next morning, when the truck came by, he stopped it and called to Sammy Grant. By the time Sammy came around by the tail of the truck, Mr. Malone shot him right there. He was so close, and with a 12-gauge gun, this boy bled a lot.

The man who owned the truck stop a car and rush him to the hospital. By the time he got there, he had bled out the blood that would keep him alive, and the doctor asked this man to rush out and get some blood right away, less he was going to die.

The man came down to the city market where people sell the vegetables to find the guardian of this boy or the mother to try to get some blood,

159 or try to get some money to buy blood for him. She said she didn't have any
173 money. Everybody was standing around saying it was wrong, he should
682 not have been shot. But I said, "Are you trying to help this boy? You can't listen to people say it's wrong. If they feel sorry for the boy they'll go down and give him blood."

I said, "Wait a minute, I'll get two of my brother-in-laws and I will go down and give him blood." So we went down. I gave the first pint and my two brother-in-laws gave the other two pints and save his life.

I ask him to tell me the truth what happened. I said to him, "Sammy, just as I gave you my blood to save your life, I will spend every dime and make sacrifice for you to help bring this thing to justice through the court." And he told me just what I've said.

So I went on Broad Street and hired a lawyer. He ask me to find a hundred dollars because he said he have to hire a stenographer to carry to Johns Island. The magistrate might not stick to the word he said in the court, so he need somebody to keep a record.

For a long time we heard nothing about the case. Finally I called up this lawyer and ask him what's wrong. I fussed at him a long time. Then we heard from the other man's lawyer that he wanted to make some kind of deal with Sammy. And we went and met with this lawyer.

I told him, "Mr. Malone shot Sammy with malice of forethought. Now. I realize that it's a bad thing to call a woman a liar, but I don't think a man should be shot down for calling somebody a liar."

I said, "You know we have had one man shot dead over a dog and nothing came of it. The family paid a white lawyer to look out for the family and bring this thing to trial and nobody heard anything from it yet. Here's another man being shot for a dog. Now this is bad for race relations."

I told him if he were to come to Johns Island, with one man shot outright and another shot and left for dead, he might not be safe--and he could be ever so right, but because of the things that happened, Negroes began to get malice in their heart for white folks. We can't afford to let things like that go on. We, as people who know better, should make it better and make race relations better.

So he decided to pay us what Sammy had lost. He said that he hadn't felt like he was going to lose the case, but if he had won the case in court and then heard what I had just told him afterward, he never would have felt himself justified.

159 These are the things, then, that motivated me to organize in 1949 a pro-
185 gressive movement, that we could help the people to be better citizens, give them a chance to get a better education, and know how to reason and look out for themselves, and take more part in political action.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
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Georgia
St. Simon's Island

that was distinctive. He taught his wife Milly (Illustration 34)[A] how to make "goof bags." Apparently his magic was no more potent than Gullah Jack's when it came to protecting himself. Gullah Jack was executed in Charleston for his part in the uprising of 1822; and when Jim Polecat was old, decrepit, and a nuisance, his own children pushed him into the fireplace, and burned him to ashes. Milly must have been a peculiar character. She would turn her back on you when she had anything to say. When her cabin was built she insisted on having no windows—a good African mode of construction. She said: "Door's enough to watch." When urged to have them for ventilation, she insisted that "Chimney gives enough air." There were no windows put in. The walls of her cabin were lined with boxes and trunks that had belonged to her children, all of whom were dead or in the penitentiary. It is no wonder she was moody, and that the other Negroes were afraid of her. They might well be, for—in addition to being looked upon as a witch—she was the mother of seven murderers.

In every Negro settlement there are usually frizzled chickens.[31] These curious-looking birds are supposed to be on the watch for goof bags or any "sleight-o'-hand" buried under doorsteps. Josephine tells me that she always keeps one around for such a purpose. If the chicken "come clean" (loses its feathers), it is a sure proof that it has scratched up something intended for its owner's bad luck. So much for black magic. You hear little about it, but the belief in its efficacy turns up every now and then when least expected.

At the risk of being tiresome, it may be well to call attention to various obscure customs among the Negroes that could easily be passed over as idiosyncrasies. From the pulpit of the Jewtown African Baptist Church I heard Parson Joe Lowman say with a weak voice that he was feelin' very po'ly and in no condition to preach a Christmas sermon, but by the grace of God he would do his best. I was astonished to find, as he warmed to his subject, "The Christ Child and the Three Wise Men," that his voice grew stronger and stronger. When his sermon was finished, I realized that I would never hear a better one, and that he had either received supernatural aid or was a consummate artist—perhaps both. Later, I read an article by Morton C. Kahn, on "Adventures in Medical Research among Two Strange Tribes of Dutch Guiana,"[32] in which the author described the greeting employed by the Bush Negroes, the translation of which runs somewhat as follows: "Howdy, white man.

[31] Captain R. S. Rattray tells us such freakish birds are called asense chickens in Ashanti.
[32] "Where Black Man Meets Red." Natural History, May, 1936.

A. [For Illustration 34, see Category 754, plate facing p. 225--Analyst]